

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Parks and Recreation Department Staff

**From:** Lee Geertz, City Manager

**Date:** February 19, 2026

**Subject:** Recommendation to Close Kimberly Park Pool – 2026 Pool Season

The purpose of this memo is to formally communicate the City staff's recommendation to **close the Kimberly Park Pool for the 2026 pool season**, subject to review and action by the West Liberty Mayor and City Council. This recommendation is based on a combination of financial constraints, aging infrastructure, operational challenges, and identified liability risks.

Recent state legislation limiting municipal tax levy growth has significantly constrained City revenues. As a result of these property tax limitations, the City's General Fund budget has been reduced by approximately **\$100,000**. At the same time, the City is not seeking to increase property taxes. These fiscal constraints have required staff to closely evaluate discretionary and seasonal facilities and programs supported by the General Fund.

In addition to property tax limitations, the following factors have contributed to the recommendation for closure:

### Facility Infrastructure and Equipment

- The Kimberly Park Pool infrastructure, including the **pool concrete deck, pool shell, and shower house—has not been renovated or structurally updated in nearly 30 years.**
- While the City has completed necessary repairs over time, the facility has not undergone a comprehensive renovation or modernization.
- Pool equipment is **outdated**, and the City is increasingly unable to obtain replacement parts for motors, filters, and other essential pool components.
- Continued operation relies on aging systems that pose increasing maintenance risks and costs.

### Staffing Challenges

- Lifeguard recruitment and retention continue to be difficult for a short summer season.
- Due to the size of the Kimberly Park Pool, the City is required to maintain a **specific lifeguard-to-patron staffing ratio.**
- Over the past **seven years**, the City has consistently struggled to maintain adequate staffing levels, resulting in limited operating hours and difficulty keeping the pool open for a full operational day throughout the season.

## Leak and Liability Concerns

- The pool has a **significant water leak** that has impacted on a nearby private residence, requiring water to continuously run through the homeowner's sump pump.
- In recognition of this issue, the City established an agreement with the affected property owner.
- This leak represents an **identified liability** with the potential to create substantial costs should further damage occur.

## Financial Performance

- Over the past **five years**, the City has averaged approximately **\$16,700 in annual revenue** during the short pool season.
- Average annual operating expenses over the same period have been approximately **\$107,000**.
- The resulting average loss to operate the pool has been approximately **\$81,000 per season**.

The City acknowledges that the Kimberly Park Pool is an important quality-of-life facility for the West Liberty community. However, when faced with decreasing property tax revenues and increasing costs related to employee wages, insurance, equipment, infrastructure, and supplies, **City staff recommend closing the pool for the 2026 season**.

The Parks and Recreation Board's recommendation, along with City staff's analysis, **will be presented to the West Liberty Mayor and City Council at the regular City Council meeting scheduled for March 3, 2026**. The City Council will act on staff and Parks Board recommendations at the meeting.

City staff will also work directly with the **City's Communication Specialist** to ensure clear, consistent, and transparent communication is provided to the public should closure be recommended.

Please note that **if the Parks and Recreation Board recommends opening the facility, the Mayor and City Council retain the authority to close the pool** based on the information presented and overall fiscal and operational considerations. Additionally, **if both the Parks and Recreation Board and City Council vote to open the facility**, pool operations may be **very limited**, potentially resulting in **less than 30 days of operation during the 2026 season**, depending on staffing availability, equipment functionality, and budget capacity.

If approved, closing the pool for the 2026 season will allow the City the opportunity to have City engineers **evaluate the pool infrastructure and equipment during ideal weather**

**conditions.** City staff will return to the Parks and Recreation Board, Mayor, and City Council in the **Fall of 2026** with a report outlining findings and potential options for the future of the Kimberly Park Pool.

We recognize the difficulty of this recommendation and appreciate the professionalism and dedication of Parks and Recreation staff. Additional communication regarding next steps and operational impacts will be provided following City Council action.

Please direct any questions to your supervisor or the City Manager's office.